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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NDJAMENA 000106

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PARIS AND LONDON FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

E.O. 12958: 03/07/18
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [CASCSU](#) [CD](#)
SUBJECT: FRENCH READY FOR ONE LAST CHAD EVACUATION,
ACTIVE IN PROMOTING POLITICAL REFORM PROCESS

CLASSIFIED BY DCM LUCY TAMLYN FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND
(D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: According to the French Charge D'Affaires, a reprise of the February 2-3 attack on N'Djamena is less likely, particularly in view of the thinning Zaghawa forces Timan Erdimi's RFC. France is ready to perform another evacuation if need be, but a second evacuation would trigger the downsizing of the French mission in Chad. U.S. interest in assisting the Commission of Inquiry into the event surrounding the disappearance of opposition leader Ibni Oumar is warmly welcomed, but the EU is still concerned about the credibility of the Commission and is discussing changes to the mandate and composition with the Government of Chad. This meeting is part of our efforts to consult closely and communicate continuously with the French on the security situation in N'Djamena. End Summary.

¶2. (U) The Ambassador met with French Charge D'Affaires Francois Barateau on March 19 for a discussion of security and political developments in Chad. French Pol Officer Ahlm Serija-Noy and DCM (notetaker) attended.

SECURITY SITUATION IN CHAD

¶3. (C) CDA Barateau recognized that Sudan was resupplying and rearming Chadian rebels but felt that rebel ability to re-launch attacks against N'Djamena was undermined by dissension among the rebel groups and difficulties in recruiting to fill losses suffered in January-February. Barateau said that the Zaghawa RFC of Timan Erdimi had "practically fallen apart" as the Zaghawa ethnic group reunited to defend itself, including pro-Deby Zaghawa, Sudanese Zaghawa in the JEM and Tora Bora groups and former RFC Zaghawa. He reiterated the point made by his Ambassador in a previous conversation with Ambassador Nigro that while the west pressed President Deby to cut ties with the JEM, Deby needed them more and more to protect himself. Barateau did not think that there would be an attack on N'Djamena similar to the last one - at least before the rainy season. He did not eliminate the possibility of other destabilizing events within the city, such as a coup d'etat or rebel infiltration.

FRENCH PLANS TO ASSIST CHAD, EXPATRIATES IN ANOTHER CRISIS

¶4. (C) Barateau recalled that French President Nicolas Sarkozy had made clear that France would not intervene in Africa - "at least alone." But in

referring to the UN Security Council Resolution that gave France a mandate after the last attack, he appeared to be hedging bets that France might look for similar "cover" in the future. Asked if France would perform another evacuation along the lines of the early February air lift of expatriates, Barateau responded without hesitation "yes." But he went on to explain that they would only do it "one more time." If such an evacuation were to take place, France would downsize its mission in Chad and probably suspend bilateral assistance. Even now French authorities were not sure that they wanted to fully rehabilitate the French cultural center - looted and vandalized during the last attacks.

15. (C) Concerning the protection and evacuation plan for expatriates, CDA Barateau explained that this would remain largely the same as that activated in February. The French would alert expatriates to come to four or five protected assembly areas before being conducted to the French base at the airport for evacuation. He said that the assembly areas were still the same, although the French would likely direct those arriving at the French School to proceed directly to the base as they had concluded that the school was difficult to protect. Barateau confirmed that he planned to test the Embassy radios we had given the French (utilizing a reserved frequency) and that this would improve our ability to coordinate in the event of another crisis. The French are also equipping themselves with Cameroonian mobile telephones in case the Chadian cell phone network goes down as it did in February.

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IMPLEMENTING THE AUGUST 13 ACCORD

16. (SBU) CDA Barateau appeared confident that a new government would be announced soon, hopefully with a Prime Minister empowered to move the August 13 political process long. The key element in such a new government, he said was a Prime Minister with real power to direct the ministers. He was at a loss to name any one person among the current political opposition who might fit the bill (he explained that all of them had served in previous governments and none stood out). One name of interest might be that of Minister of Decentralization, Abdraman Djasnabaille. (Comment: Djasnabaille is a southerner and a former dissident in exile who returned to serve as Minister of Human Rights two years ago before assuming his current position. End comment)

17. (SBU) Concerning the Commission of Inquiry into the events surrounding the disappearance of opposition leaders and other alleged human rights violations in February, Barateau shared EU concerns that the first decree setting up the commission had not been acceptable in terms of the mandate. Even the name: "Commission of Inquiry in Sudanese Aggression" was a problem. The EU did not want to be associated with a Commission that was just a paper tiger. An EU/French/German troika was working with the government to come up with a new decree for a Commission that would be more along the lines of what they had in mind when they recommended it to President Deby. They also planned to create a second, international commission working alongside the national commission. The troika would participate on both commissions, as would, he expected, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva. The AU was named in the Commission, but, according to Barateau, did not have much appetite for participation (most likely because of the Commission's clear anti-

Sudan which did not sit well with AU neutrality.)

18. (SBU) The Ambassador asked whether the United States could be helpful to the Commission. Barateau welcomed U.S. interest, saying that the Chadian commission needed all the help it could get, but asked that we wait a few days when the EU had formulated a final position. The Ambassador emphasized that giving a concrete area of competence (such as forensics) and a defined scope of work would help us explain to Washington how best to respond.

COMMENT:

19. (SBU) We look forward to working with the EU-led troika on the Commission and the follow-up to the August 13 accord process. This meeting is part of our efforts to consult closely and communicate continuously with the French on the security situation in N'Djamena. We are also meeting regularly with French military involved in the security area.

Nigro